



March 18, 2022

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The Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance (BCSA) is a non-profit organization that works to end the private ownership and commercial exploitation of big cats and other wild cats, while providing expert resources to its sanctuary members aimed at improving the health and welfare of rescued captive wild cats. View a full list of our members at: www.bigcatalliance.org/our-members/.

To: Members of the House Agriculture Committee, Minnesota House of Representatives

Re: Oppose House File 4166 – Exemption to MN Regulated Animal Law

The Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance (BCSA), comprised of reputable sanctuary operators and highly regarded national and international partner organizations, strongly opposes House File 4166 to exempt the Zoological Association of America (ZAA) from current law that restricts the possession of big cats, nonhuman primates, and bears. The BCSA's 16 sanctuary members care for more than 540 wild cats, as well as other captive wildlife.

We stand in strong support of our member, The Wildcat Sanctuary, which would be directly affected by the bill. The Wildcat Sanctuary has long provided an invaluable service to the state by rescuing and providing a lifelong home for wild cats in need. In doing so, they promote animal welfare and public safety, as well as make important economic contributions to the community.

The BCSA has serious concerns about this bill, as it would weaken current protections and adversely affect the safety of regulated species and the public. Minnesota currently has one of the strongest laws in the country to restrict the possession of dangerous wild animals, which has resulted in a significant decline in dangerous incidents in your state. The proposed bill would open the door for the return of such incidents.

Under this bill, ZAA facilities would no longer have to register regulated animals with local authorities or comply with other state-mandated safety, animal care, and recordkeeping requirements for big cats, bears, and nonhuman primates. This only serves to weaken regulations for an organization that has not proven itself to be worthy of such consideration.

In fact, ZAA standards are not as stringent as those of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), nor are they as strongly implemented and enforced. In fact, the ZAA's lower bar for accreditation has attracted exhibitors who lack high levels of animal care, financial stability, proper staffing, and strict safety standards.

The BCSA is further concerned that this bill would have the consequence of inviting irresponsible exhibitors into the state who know they can meet the ZAA's low standards, putting animals, keepers, and the public at risk.

For these reasons, the BCSA strongly opposes House File 4166. We urge you to vote against this bill and preserve the excellent protections now in place for animals and humans alike.

Sincerely,

John Madigan
Steering Committee Chair
Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance